

Alternate plan eyed in waste site cleanup

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OLD BRIDGE — A court-ordered cleanup plan for the Madison-CPS toxic waste site here may be moot, based on the results of test borings that reportedly show serious problems with the proposal.

If a Superior Court judge agrees, an alternate cleanup plan — backed by Madison Industries Inc., CPS Chemical Co. and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) — may be implemented.

A 1981 court decision found Madison, a zinc-processing firm, and CPS, a manufacturer of specialty chemicals, responsible for pollution that affected a portion of Perth Amboy's wellfields located at the Runyon Watershed here.

The 1981 court-ordered cleanup plan, supported by Perth Amboy, called for construction of a "bathtub" containment area for Madison-CPS pollution.

The sides of the bathtub would be a one-mile-long slurry (jelly-like) wall that would completely surround the Madison-CPS site. The bottom of the tub would be impervious South Amboy fire clay.

But test borings which were completed in June apparently show the fire clay in the proposed containment area is not continuous, according to Blanche Hoffman, chairwoman of the Madison-CPS Citizens Advisory Committee.

"The test borings indicate serious problems with the court-ordered plan, which assumes the fire clay is continuous," Mrs. Hoffman said. "I would say the plan is probably dead."

Mrs. Hoffman, who also chairs the township's Environmental Commission, recently secured copies of the test borings from state Deputy Attorney General Ronald Hekschi.

The borings — taken by Wheran Engineering (representing CPS) and supervised by the DEP and AdTek Engineering (representing Perth Amboy) — were ordered by Superior Court Judge John E. Keefe.

The judge said he needed more

information before deciding on which cleanup plan would be implemented for the Madison-CPS site, located near the Old Bridge-Sayreville border.

Information on the state's evaluation of the borings, and what impact it may have on the court's decision, could not be obtained from the DEP yesterday.

The industry-DEP plan calls for a 900-foot, crescent-shaped wall for limited containment but maximum removal of Madison-CPS pollution.

"If it is the company plan, what safeguards are there for Old Bridge — for our residents and our water system?" Mrs. Hoffman said. "Do you get a cleanup plan just to get something going, or do you really get a good job?"

Eugene Dunlop, president of the Old Bridge Township Council, had a somewhat different view.

"I don't have a problem with the company plan, so long as the cleanup gets underway. If the bathtub doesn't hold water, what's the sense of having it?" Dunlop asked. "At least with the company plan we're taking care of something that's long overdue."

But both Dunlop and Mrs. Hoffman were critical of the DEP.

"Our hands are tied because we were told by the court (Keefe) that the DEP is representing our interests. But the DEP is going along with the industries," Mrs. Hoffman said.

Keefe ruled earlier this year that Old Bridge could not intervene in the legal battle between the DEP and Perth Amboy over the cleanup plans.

Old Bridge was seeking to propose a third cleanup plan that would contain the best elements of the other two proposals.

"Nothing has happened in 2½ years. If people want to fault Perth Amboy, let them. But I blame the DEP for the cleanup delay," Dunlop said.

Said CPS spokesman Frank Brill: "Things are progressing. There has been no footdragging by the companies or the DEP. We're close to a resolution."

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